

FACT SHEET

COEUR d'ALENE RIVER BASIN, IDAHO



JUNE 1998

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working toward developing a cleanup plan for those areas in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin that are adversely impacted by mining-related contamination. Our goal is to develop a cleanup plan in cooperation with the ongoing efforts of the States of Idaho and Washington, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Federal Natural Resources Trustees and local communities. This cleanup plan will manage widespread metals contamination associated with historic mine ore processing and mining waste disposal. Where these metals come to rest, they may negatively affect human health, or plant and animal life in the Basin.

EPA and its partners are looking for ways to address contamination, while sustaining the local economy and enhancing the Basin's value. We look forward to working collaboratively with communities and other stakeholders during this process. We have prepared this fact sheet to inform citizens about our work in the Basin and to encourage community participation in this work.

EPA and its partners are also in the process of developing a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) to actively solicit participation of local communities, interested groups and concerned citizens in the development of the cleanup plan. We need your input on that plan so that it reflects the concerns and needs of the community.

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Public Information Meetings

To hear more about the ongoing efforts of the state, federal and tribal governments, environmental groups, and citizens who have an interest in the Basin, please plan to attend one of the open houses and public meetings scheduled below. During each open house, staff will conduct community interviews to gather input into the Basin Community Relations process.

- MON. June 29 - Wallace, ID**
6 - 7 pm - Open House
7 - 9 pm - Meeting
The Gold Room
Wallace Inn, 100 Front St.
- TUES. June 30 - Harrison, ID**
6 - 7 pm - Open House
7 - 9 pm - Meeting
EMT Building
201 Frederick Ave.
(across from City Hall)
- WED. July 1 - Worley, ID**
6 - 7 pm - Open House
7 - 9 pm - Meeting
Tribal Community Center
1st St. near Lakeside Elementary
Bus Barn
- MON. July 6 - Coeur d'Alene, ID**
6 - 7 pm - Open House
7 - 9 pm - Meeting
Senior Center
1916 Lakewood Dr.
- WED. July 8 - Spokane, WA**
6 - 7 pm - Open House
7 - 9 pm - Meeting
Public Health Center
1101 West College Ave.

The Study Area

EPA has a responsibility under the law to investigate areas that are potentially contaminated, to determine if there is an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment, and to identify ways to minimize the risk. To accomplish this, we are conducting a detailed study, called a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) to identify the types and extent of contamination and to evaluate possible cleanup alternatives. The RI/FS is authorized under the Comprehensive Environmental, Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), better known as the Superfund law. EPA also plans to use its tools under the Clean Water Act to focus on water quality improvement, in conjunction with state-wide water programs. The RI/FS is an open, public process and all information gathered from the study will be made available to the public at the Information Repositories listed at the end of this fact sheet.

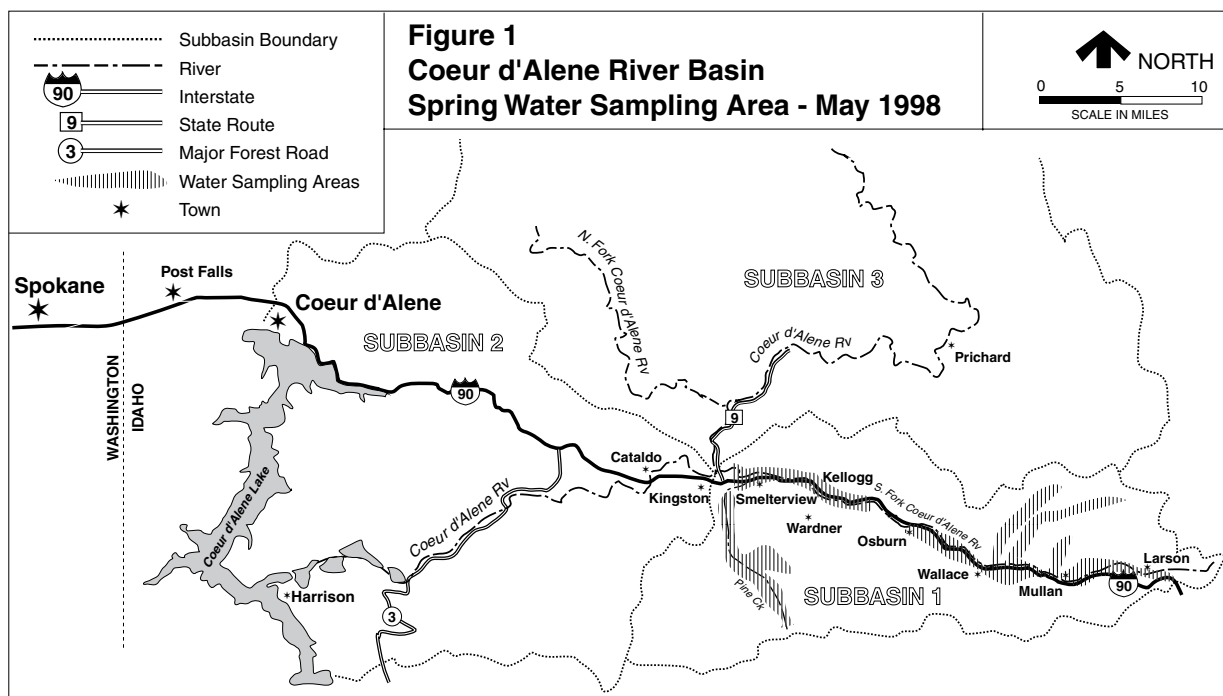
Whenever possible, EPA and others will use existing data and studies to save time and money while conducting the RI/FS. We will use information gathered from a variety of sources and will build upon the cleanup activities of private and public parties such as the State of

Idaho Silver Valley Natural Resource Trustees, the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, EPA, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Coeur d'Alene Basin Restoration Project, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe (Tribe).

Additional environmental information will be needed to develop a comprehensive understanding of where contaminants are located and what cleanup alternatives might be appropriate. Sampling of water, soil, and sediments will continue in the Coeur d'Alene River system, Coeur d'Alene Lake and the Spokane River. Because we are investigating predominantly waterborne contamination from mine tailings and erosion sediments, our initial study activities will focus on the floodplain of the Coeur d'Alene River system and adjoining areas. (See Figure 1 for Sample Areas). In May, EPA's contractors collected samples from water, and in June and July, EPA will be sampling soil and sediments in public areas and along river banks.

Our goal is to use the RI/FS to bring together diverse interests and stakeholders in the creation of a comprehensive community-based cleanup plan.

(Continued on Page 3)



The Study Area *(Continued from Page 2)*

To support that goal, EPA, the mining companies, the States of Washington and Idaho, the Tribe, and other federal agencies are using a professional mediator to identify ways we can work together to reach our goals in the Basin.

The mediator, Richard Dana of the Judicial Arbitrator Group in Denver, Colorado, was selected by the above-mentioned parties. EPA hopes that the mediation will help us all work together in the long term for a more unified cleanup in the Basin.

The Challenges...

Mining activities in the Silver Valley, which is located in northern Idaho, began in the late 1800s and continue today. In the past it was common for mine owners to dispose of mine wastes directly into the river, resulting in widespread contamination of the floodplain. These floodplain areas are a part of the Coeur d'Alene River Basin, an area that includes Lake Coeur d'Alene, the North, South and main stem forks of the Coeur d'Alene River, the Spokane River, and various tributaries.

Impacts from mine areas to the environment include the presence of heavy metals (lead, cadmium and zinc) in the Basin's lakes, rivers and sediments. For example, lead is particularly harmful to humans and can cause (through the air or through ingestion) such

adverse health effects as brain and nervous system damage in children, birth defects, and chronic kidney damage. Zinc is harmful to fish and other aquatic organisms, and animals ingesting heavy metals can die or can threaten the health of people who eat them.

Today, federal and state laws regulate the release of mine tailings to prevent similar problems from occurring. But despite these recent regulatory and technological changes, we face a number of challenges as we work together to find ways to resolve the difficult issues of mine-waste-related cleanup and restoration of the environment while being sensitive to regional economies.

On-Going Cleanup Efforts

For several years now, local citizens, state and local governments, area-wide environmental groups, federal agencies and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe have been working to come up with solutions to environmental problems associated with historic mining in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. EPA's cleanup effort is just one of many that are taking place throughout the area.

The following are just a few examples of on-going successful cleanup efforts in the Basin:

- ✓ In addition to jointly managing the cleanup of the Bunker Hill Superfund Site, the State of Idaho and EPA are working to implement Clean Water Act requirements that help protect water quality so that fish and other aquatic life can live in a healthy ecosystem.
- ✓ For several years, the Coeur d'Alene Basin Restoration Project's Citizen's Advisory Committee has worked diligently to inform

and represent communities in the Basin. They have worked on such efforts as the development of the Lake Coeur d'Alene Management Plan to encourage local stewardship of natural resources.

- ✓ The Silver Valley Natural Resources Trustees have helped to reduce metals contamination by removing some mine tailings that are leaching heavy metals into streams and wetland habitats.
- ✓ The US Forest Service, Department of Interior and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe have coordinated efforts to study and document natural resource damages, and have conducted some tailings removals.
- ✓ EPA has provided funds to local institutions to support citizen's technical advisory groups and economic redevelopment.

Questions About EPA's Upcoming Efforts in the Coeur d'Alene Basin

The following are some answers to questions that may be important to you. If you have other questions or concerns not addressed in this fact sheet, please call one of the EPA staff numbers listed at the end of this fact sheet.

1. Will the Basin be a Superfund Site?

EPA listed the Bunker Hill Facility on the National Priorities List (list of the nation's most hazardous releases) in 1983. The law establishes that the Bunker Hill Facility is the area where contamination from mining-related activities has come to be located. Superfund is a "tool" that Congress has provided us to use to clean up the environment. Superfund response will only apply where there is contamination that poses a substantial threat to human health or the environment. The entire Basin will not be designated a "superfund site" because the entire Basin is not contaminated with mining wastes.

2. After all the studies and cleanup at the Bunker Hill Superfund site, is more cleanup in the Basin really necessary?

Cleanup inside the 21-square mile area known as the Bunker Hill Superfund Site, "the box," has been progressing well and we expect the project to conclude over the next couple of years. Cleanup in the box has focused on protecting human health in the communities of Pinehurst, Smelterville, Kellogg, Wardner, and Elizabeth Park.

Cleanup of other areas in the Basin is necessary because mining waste still contaminates water bodies and soil up-stream and downstream of the box. EPA first concentrated cleanup in the box because it posed the highest threat to humans and is the largest source of metals

loading to the Coeur d'Alene River. Even though EPA and the State are completing cleanup inside the box, we are still responsible for cleaning areas in the Basin that have adverse levels of lead, zinc and other mining wastes. We chose to use the Superfund process in the Basin because it provides a cohesive framework for identifying problems, analyzing alternatives, making decisions, and taking action--with all phases conducted openly to allow continual involvement of all public and private stakeholders.

3. Can I be held responsible for pollution on my property?

Under EPA's Policy Towards Owners of Residential Property, EPA will not take actions against a homeowner if the homeowner was not responsible for contamination found on a person's property. EPA has no intention of bringing residential property owners and communities into litigation.

4. Can I still sell my home or conduct real estate transactions?

Yes, you can sell your home and conduct real estate transactions just like you usually do. EPA is very concerned about the confusion associated with Superfund cleanups and we will work aggressively with communities and local leaders to facilitate local commerce transactions. To do that, EPA makes a wide variety of information available to potential buyers and lenders and, in commercial transacting, can provide a "covenant not to sue." Based on our experience inside the box and around the nation, property values may actually increase after contamination is removed.

5. How can I learn more about what types of data are available or what sampling activities are taking place in the Basin?

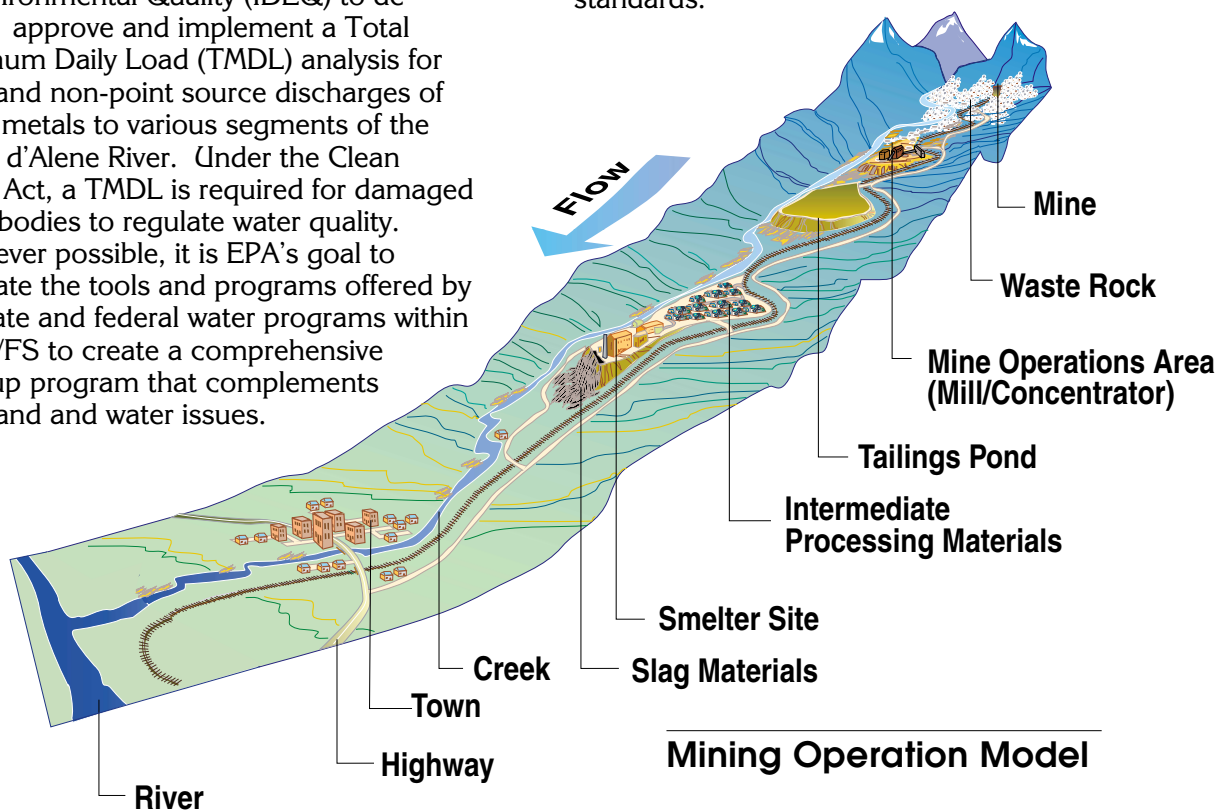
If you would like a copy of the sampling plan or need data or sampling results, please visit the Information Repositories listed at the end of this fact sheet or call Nancy Wilson, EPA Community Relations Coordinator at 1-800-424-4EPA. As we gather information, we will do our best to make it available to the community through fact sheets and other public documents. If you are not on our mailing list, please fill out and mail us the form on the back of this fact sheet.

6. How will EPA's Superfund process affect water quality issues and water regulations?

The Superfund RI/FS process will be coordinated with other on-going cleanup activities in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. This includes efforts by EPA and Idaho's Division of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) to develop, approve and implement a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analysis for point and non-point source discharges of heavy metals to various segments of the Coeur d'Alene River. Under the Clean Water Act, a TMDL is required for damaged water bodies to regulate water quality. Whenever possible, it is EPA's goal to integrate the tools and programs offered by the state and federal water programs within the RI/FS to create a comprehensive cleanup program that complements both land and water issues.

7. How is the "Natural Resource Damage Assessment" (NRDA) affected by EPA's RI/FS?

In 1996 the federal government, including EPA, the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture, filed a federal law suit to seek payment from area mining companies for cleanup and restoration of the environment in the Basin. The tribe and federal trustees will use the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process to determine the effects of contamination. The RI/FS is a process being conducted in order to determine the best way to address contamination in the Basin. EPA is coordinating technical approaches to cleanup and sharing data with the other agencies involved in the lawsuit, as well as the State of Idaho and other stakeholders. EPA's hope is that the RI/FS will go forward in an open and cooperative manner and perhaps provide a basis for a comprehensive cleanup plan that addresses restoration needs as well as other environmental standards.



How Can You Get Involved?

In conjunction with cleanup activities, we will work closely with the communities to participate in the RI/FS process and to develop a Community Involvement Plan. The plan will provide community members the opportunity to have direct input to the decision-making process. The Community Involvement Plan will help EPA and others respond to some of the concerns of the community. *We want to determine how local communities want to be involved in upcoming cleanup decisions. We recognize that success depends on community involvement.*

- ✓ Sign up to be on the mailing list for future fact sheets by calling Nancy Wilson, EPA Community Relations Coordinator, toll-free at 1-800-424-4EPA or directly at 1-206-553-1237.
- ✓ Volunteer to participate in upcoming community interviews to share your ideas and concerns by calling Nancy Wilson at EPA's toll-free number. Community interviews will also be conducted between 6 - 7pm at the upcoming open houses.
- ✓ Attend upcoming open house/public meetings in June and July. (See page 1.) At these meetings you can ask questions, meet people, and provide your input on the scope of our investigations and how you want to be involved.
- ✓ Review and comment on project documents and the upcoming Community Involvement Plan.
- ✓ Visit one of the Information Repositories listed at the end of this fact sheet to learn more about cleanup efforts and to review project documents.
- ✓ Form and/or get involved in an existing local citizens advisory group to keep active in cleanup activities and represent your community's interests.

What's Next?

The public meetings in late June and early July are being held to answer any questions people may have and to listen to the concerns of the community. EPA will continue to conduct community interviews with local elected officials, local citizens, and other stakeholders to gather information that will be used in the Community Involvement Plan. A draft Plan will be developed and undergo public comment late this summer.

EPA also plans to continue sending out fact sheets and updates about on-going activities and sampling plans. Be sure to send us the mailer on the back or call Nancy Wilson, toll-free at 1-800-424-4EPA if you did not receive this fact sheet in the mail and wish to be on the mailing list for future updates.

Your Right To Know

Where to get Information

Information Repositories:

Information about the study area is available for the public's review at the locations below. Anyone can request this information by calling EPA's toll-free number at 1-800-424-4EPA or by visiting EPA Region 10's Web Site.

- **North Idaho College Library**
1000 West Garden Ave.
Coeur d'Alene, ID
- **Spokane Public Library**
906 West Main St.
Spokane, WA
- **Harrison City Hall**
100 Frederick St.
Harrison, ID
- **Wallace Public Library**
415 River St.
Wallace, ID

Please visit the **Coeur d'Alene Basin Home Page** on EPA Region 10's Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/r10earth>.
Click on the Environmental Cleanup Office's icon to begin your search.

If you have any questions regarding this fact sheet, please call:

Marianne Deppman,
EPA Community Relations
Coordinator
1-206-553-1237 or
toll-free at 1-800-424-4EPA.

Earl Liverman
EPA Project Manager in
Coeur d'Alene
1-208-664-4858

Mary Jane Nearman
EPA Project Manager
1-206-553-6642 or
toll free at 1-800-424-4EPA

For those with impaired hearing or speech, please contact EPA's Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at 1-206-553-1698. To ensure effective communication with everyone, arrangements for special assistance can be made by calling EPA's toll-free number.



COEUR d'ALENE RIVER BASIN, IDAHO - JUNE 1998

**Would you like to be included on EPA's
mailing list for future information
about this project?**

Contact EPA directly toll-free at 1-800-424-4EPA (4372), or
fill out the information below and return to:
EPA Region 10, 1200 6th Avenue (ECO-081), Seattle, WA 98101

Thank you!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Region 10 (ECO-081)
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

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